

New clear-cut burn rules

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There were a few sparks at North Glengarry's recent meeting while council gnawed the gristle over all-night, open-air burning.

The issue is expected to be on the agenda later this month. That is when council will discuss a suggested one-year moratorium on all-night burns on clear-cut sites. The one-year ban would permit leftover wood to dry before it would be lit.

The bylaw was introduced by North Glengarry fire services administrator Bernard Lalonde, who said the controlled burn rules needed to be updated to include provisions for all-night burns, which are not permitted under the current policy.

"I think this will be good for everybody," he said after the meeting. "There is a lot of clear-cutting going around. Sooner or later, these people are going to apply to burn this stuff."



As deforestation is taking place throughout the municipality, the township receives complaints from residents about the smoke created by burning debris on cleared sites.

Mr. Lalonde said the municipality is considering permitting people to carry out supervised all-night burns, possibly just in winter.

Waiting period

Mr. Lalonde notes a one-year post-clearing waiting period would reduce the environmental impact of burning, since damp wood takes longer to burn and creates more smoke than cured wood.

"They have a choice: they can either haul it, chip it, or wait a year," he says. "The waiting of a year is the cheaper option."

He also observes that a fire that is allowed to die down and is restarted emits more smoke than an uninterrupted fire.

Supervision a priority

Mr. Lalonde said an over-night burn would have to be continuously monitored and controlled and that an excavator be present in order to extinguish the fire if necessary. Controlled fires must be at least 50 metres from the property residence and five metres from a building, woodland or forest.

Additional restrictions are in place for agricultural land-clearing where controlled burns must be at least 75 metres from any building or wood-land and 200 metres from the nearest residence. Some council members were worried about an all-night fire getting out of control, asking who will police the burn supervisor. Ultimately, council decided to defer a decision until the document could be revised to include a condition that residents planning all-night burns would wait a year for the remaining wood to dry.

Mayor Chris McDowell, who supports all-year post-cut burns, sees the benefits of a one-year post-cut waiting period. "You have to have someone awake at night to look after it. I hope it goes through. I don't see anything wrong with it."